

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 12, 2012

Agenda Item: Full Curl Big Horn Sheep Habitat Acquisition

Division: Fish and Wildlife, Wildlife Bureau **Action Needed:** Approval of Final Action

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 minutes

Background

FWP proposes to complete the fee-title acquisition of approximately 438 acres of property located in Sanders County for \$425,000 using bighorn sheep auction funds. This parcel is adjacent to the Flathead Indian Reservation and is located about 10 miles southeast of Plains. The land provides excellent spring, fall, and winter habitat for the Perma-Paradise (Knowles Creek) bighorn sheep herd and for mule deer. The southerly aspect of this property contributes to its importance as winter range. The steep cliffs provide critical lambing areas and escape habitat for bighorn sheep. Bighorn sheep also use the property during the summer. The Perma-Paradise bighorn herd has an estimated current population of 300-375 animals. Hunter access in HD 124 is very limited. This property also provides critical bighorn sheep hunting access to land north of the Flathead River, and the adjacent Department of Natural Resources and Lolo National Forest properties. In addition, the land has 1 5/8 miles of Flathead River frontage. This property would be managed similar to other bighorn sheep wildlife management areas in the lower Clark Fork region. This project compliments ongoing wildlife habitat conservation work by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes on adjacent Tribal lands.

Public Involvement Process & Results

The draft environmental assessment was out for a 32-day public review through March 12, 2012. A public hearing was held Feb. 22, at the Sanders County Court House in Thompson Falls. All 10 attendants spoke positively for the project. In addition, 22 written comments were received by FWP. All but one were in favor of the proposal. FWP responses to comments are included in the decision document.

Alternatives and Analysis

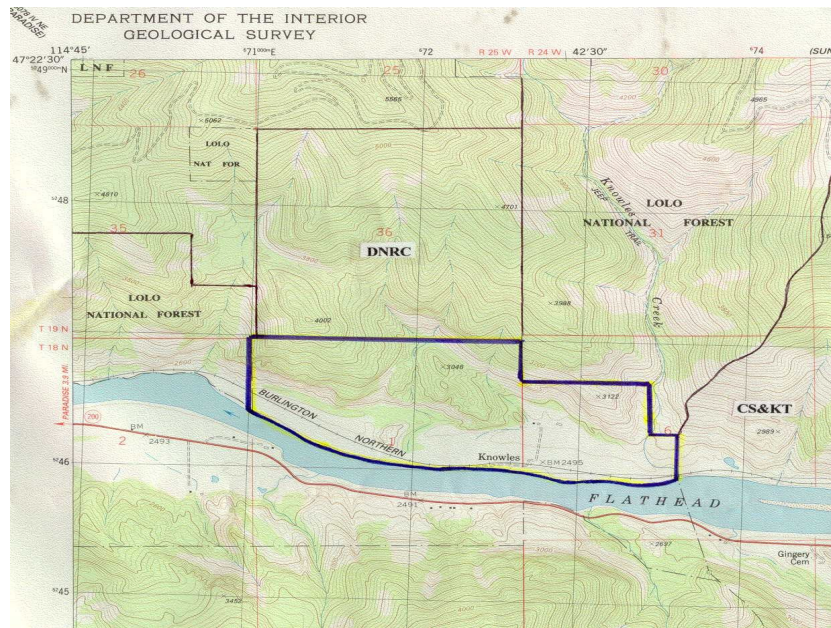
If this project is not funded, the capacity of the area to support bighorn sheep and other wildlife and wildlife-related recreation will be diminished. The property will be sold to another buyer who, if the current trend continues, will probably divide the property for future home sites, thereby reducing the capacity to support wildlife and diminishing recreational hunting opportunities in this important wildlife area.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends completion of the Full Curl property acquisition as described in the decision.

Proposed Motion

I move that the commission approve FWP's acquisition in fee title the Full Curl property using bighorn sheep auction funds.



Map showing the location of Full Curl property boundary with Department of Natural Resource land and Lolo National Forest on the north and west and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal land to the east. The Flathead River is located to the south.

